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Reserve

HOME INDUSTRIES

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TRENDS IN 1946 AND OUTLOOK FOR 1947

Reba Adams
Extension Specialist in Home Industries

Factors affecting the home industries and handicraft program in the over-all postwar program are:

1. The return, to the farm, of the families who during the war held jobs in war plants or other wartime industry.

Increased cost of living has made it necessary that, in many cases, a supplementary source of income be found. Movements toward the establishment of handicrafts production centers and training schools in 1946 show trends toward the utilization of hand skills for this purpose.

2. Increased electric power on the farm:

- (a) Taking the drudgery out of home work, thus giving the families time for more creative work.
- (b) Providing power for operating home workshop machinery and the machinery for other skills services which can bring income to the family.
- (c) Providing safer and better lights by which families may work in their shops.

According to reports from the Federal REA office, plans are being made for twice the number of farms to be electrified in 1947 as in any previous year. The total number will probably reach 1 million.

3. The demand for hand-made articles in gift shops and the demand on the part of the public for rare and individually designed objects.

One of the country's largest handicraft organizations, formed in 1940, reported it did about 10 times the business in its fifth year that it did in its first year. Other organizations report marked increases. The fact that new shops are continually opening throughout the country indicates the increased demand for hand-made products.

4. Trend toward development of small, independent enterprises.

The large number of requests, from GI's and other individuals, to the Department of Agriculture for information on subjects leading to the development

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of small enterprises confirms other evidence that many people desire small businesses of their own.

5. The reduction of the supply of imported hand-made articles resulting from the war and wartime conditions.

American-made crafts are filling many shelves in shops that were once filled with imported products, and the opportunity for the American craftsmen to put his products on the market is here. If he accepts the challenge the outlook for his future is encouraging.

6. The application of the wages and hours laws in centers producing handicrafts for the market.

Considering the time element involved in the production of handicrafts for the market it will be necessary for the producer and the supervisors of production to make adjustments in their scope of articles produced. To obtain the maximum amount of income for the time expended it will be necessary for them to utilize labor-saving devices where quality of hand workmanship and individuality of design in the finished product are not affected by doing so. It will also be advantageous to produce articles which have simple designs and speedy techniques.

7. Increased enrollments in the arts and crafts schools throughout the country.

According to the January 1946 number of the Adult Education Journal, reporting the trends in adult education, there has been a sharp rise in requests for classes in arts, handicrafts, and vocational subjects in schools and colleges throughout the country.

All the art schools visited by the home industries specialist during the past year were well attended. The officials reported full registrations for the coming year, indicating an increased demand for training in the field of arts and crafts.

8. The necessity for farm families to continue to economize by producing and repairing home furnishings with their own skills as a step toward counteracting inflationary tendencies.

In view of the high prices of furniture and other home furnishings, the farm families are facing the challenge of developing skills through which they may supply their needs in home furnishings with the minimum expenditure of money.

The expanding housing program is steadily creating the necessity for more furnishings.

9. The continued need for therapeutic and recreational activities as an aid for relieving mental worries and tense nerves.

Handicraft programs in connection with vocational rehabilitation divisions of the State Department of Education in six States (California, Michigan, Wisconsin, Georgia, Texas, Minnesota) are actively conducted or contemplated.

The Arts and Crafts Corps of the American Red Cross reports a shortage of volunteer handicraft leaders and an increasing field for services.

The occupational therapy work in hospitals continues in full capacity.

10. The scarcity of certain imported handicraft materials, causing us to look for suitable substitute materials in our own country.

Materials such as flat cane and Hong Kong grass for chair seating, which are imported from the Pacific area, and rattan reed for basketry, from Central and South America, are being shipped into this country in small quantities. The supply is being absorbed by occupational therapy groups in institutions for handicapped people. It is doubtful that we will have shipments equal to the prewar supply for quite a while yet. Manufactured synthetic or plastic cane is on the market at a higher price than natural cane. Cattail leaves and bulrush leaves are gaining in popularity as a substitute for Hong Kong grass. Paper rope is used in some cases. Black willow, which grows profusely in many areas of the United States and was the generally accepted basket material during Colonial days, is taking its place for this purpose again in absence of the rattan reed.

Raffia is still scarce, but small quantities are available for general civilian use. According to reports from the Texas Silk Industries, Inc., of Mineral Wells, natural silk production will be greatly expanded in Texas in 1947. However, the hand weaver has little or no grounds on which to be optimistic about getting silk yarn for craft work unless he raises his own cocoons and reels his own yarn. (This is quite a possibility.)

Linen is available in small quantities and higher in price than usual. Cotton yarns for handicraft work are available in limited quantities.

11. Restrictions on American-produced materials because of their wide use in the vast postwar reconstruction program.

Wool.--According to statistics from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics the stockpile of raw

wool is ample. But because of the need of fine yarns for fabrics, yarns for handicraft work are still limited. They will probably continue scarce for another year. Leather for crafts in hospitals and institutions is plentiful but for civilian use is limited. Copper and aluminum are available but in limited quantities. Silver is very limited and much higher in price than formerly. Most other handicraft materials are sufficient to supply the demand.